

Cheltenham by Adam Fieled

O this is fierce writing, dirty & sweaty, rain-drenched& squalid, caught out in the back seats of parked cars, all that mess of actual young lives – Adam Fieled's poetry moves with & through all this, carefully recording and arranging, natural history notes of the actual ecosystem so many of us live or lived within, savage, implacable and there on its own terms.

—Peter Philpott

Adam Fieled is a poet based in Philadelphia. He has released five print books: "Opera Bufo" (Otoliths, 2007), "When You Bit..." (Otoliths, 2008), "Chimes" (Blazevox, 2009), "Apparition Poems" (Blazevox, 2010), and "Equations" (blue & yellow dog press, 2011), as well as e-books like "Beams" (Blazevox, 2007), "Disturb the Universe: The Collected Essays of Adam Fieled" (Argotist e-books, 2010), and "Mother Earth" (Argotist e-books, 2011). He has work in or forthcoming in Jacket, Cordite, Pennsound, Poetry Salzburg Review, the Argotist, Great Works, Decanto, Tears in the Fence, Upstairs at Duroc, and in the & Now Awards Anthology from Lake Forest College Press. A magna cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he also holds an MFA from New England College and an MA from Temple University.



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#261

Never one to cut corners about cutting corners, you spun the Subaru into a rough U-turn right in the middle of Old York Road at midnight, scaring the shit out of this self-declared “artist.” The issue, as ever, was nothing particular to celebrate. We could only connect nothing with nothing in our private suburban waste land. Here’s where the fun starts— I got out, motherfucker. I made it. I say “I,” and it works. But Old York Road at midnight is still what it is. I still have to live there the same way you do.

#412

Each thinks the other a lonesome reprobate.
That's what I guess when I see the picture. It's
Elkins Park Square on a cold spring night;
they're almost sitting on their hands. One went
up, as they say, one went down, but you'll
never hear a word of this in Cheltenham. They
can't gloat anymore, so they make an art of
obfuscation. That's why I seldom go back.
Elkins Park Square is scary at night. There are
ghosts by the ice skating rink.

And out of this nexus, O sacred
scribe, came absolutely no one. I
don't know what you expected to find
here. This warm, safe, comforting
suburb has a smother button by
which souls are unraveled. Who
would know better than you? Even if
you're only in the back of your mind
asphyxiating. He looked out the
window— cars dashed by on
Limekiln Pike. What is it, he said,
are you dead or do you think you're Shakespeare?

Huddled in the back of a red
Jetta, I thought we were in a
Springsteen song. But there are
no backstreets in Cheltenham.
It's only the strip-mall to house
and back circuit. Anyone could've
seen us. It wasn't a full consummation—
for want of a graceful phrase, we
were too smart to fuck. There was
no playing hero for me. Nor did I
force you to confess. What could you say?
Cheltenham was soft, and all too infested.

#671

Even as a little girl, she got beat down. There was something wrong with her brains. She couldn't relate to people. Cheltenham guys noticed how adorably doll-like she was (lookin' real good, like Natalie Wood), but she wouldn't date anyone. She died a mysterious social drowning death. She got older and became a Tennessee Williams heroine-as-Jewess. I'm telling you this because I nailed her, dude. I got her to give me a blowjob.

I.

The Junior Prom deposited me (and fifteen others) on the floor of her basement. I could barely see daylight at the time, and at three in the morning I began to prowls. I was too scared to turn on any lights. She emerged like a mermaid from seaweed. I needed comfort, she enjoyed my need. We had gone out— she was bitter. The whole dialogue happened in shadows. No one was hooking up in the other room, either. You spiteful little princess.

II.

Whether off the bathroom counter
or the back of your hand, darling,
your unusual vehemence that
winter night, cob-webbed by
half-real figures, was animated by an
unfair advantage, which stooges threw
at you to keep you loopy as you
died piece-meal. All I had
was incomprehensible fury and a
broken heart— when I hit the floor
at four, you were getting ready
to play fire-starter, opened
the little snifter, curled your finger
twice in the right direction; darkness—

There's something sweet and sickly about teenagers fucking. Even laid down by the jagged rocks that bordered Tookany Creek. I think of them there, and know he's getting wasted. What's draining out of him is the will to live. She always gets him off somehow. Then they would walk over to the Little League field and huddle in the dugout. He didn't even wind up graduating from Cheltenham on time. I can't get over thinking who he could've been. Am I the only one?

It's two in the morning— this big empty field is a vacuum sucked into this little girl's mouth. Everything's little, he thinks. At least I'm big enough to get head. The problem is what she wants from me. And what she's bound to get. Just by chance, someone in a passenger seat in a car going by on Church Road sees the outline of the two figures. One is leaning— the blowjob part isn't visible. Wow, he says; this place is strange. He shakes himself, turns up the music, and gets ready for a long ride.